

REMARKS

Claims 1- 22 are pending. By this Amendment, claims 18 - 22 are added. Reconsideration and allowance in view of the above amendments and following remarks are respectfully requested.

Claims 1-3, 6 and 10-16 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) over Guidotti et al. (U.S. Patent 6,123,692). The rejection is respectfully traversed.

It is respectfully submitted that the rear part 18b of the acquisition layer 18 of Guidotti et al. does not correspond to the fluid receiving layer of claim 1 as stated in the Office Action.

In Guidotti et al., there is no main function to transport liquid from the receiving area to another area of the product. The aim is to block urine from getting into the back portion 18b so as to keep the back portion dry. Another object is to minimize urine from draining from the lower layers into the feces receiving layer 18b because it is preferable to not have urine mix with the feces.

The storage layer 19 in Guidotti et al. is not a distribution layer because if it was, then the back portion would not be that dry. The distribution layer 20 is the lower most layer. The urine stays mainly on the urine receiving side of the barrier in Guidotti et al. When the storage layer is full, liquid is transported to other portions into the lower side of the storage layer, i.e., into the side opposite the feces receiving side. The main function of the idea in Guidotti et al. is to have separation between urine and feces.

As disclosed by Guidotti et al., the liquid discharged to the front part 18a of the acquisition layer 18 will not spread to the rear part 18b to any great extent due to the differences in densities (i.e. the front part 18a having a higher density than the rear part 18b). The liquid discharged to the front part 18a is transported immediately into the underlying storage area 19 and the rear part 18b will thereby remain mostly dry. See column 4, lines 24-31.

In view of the goal to keep the rear part dry, the rear part 18b of the acquisition layer 18 of Guidotti et al. is effectively not in direct or indirect *fluid* contact with the front part 18a (which the Office Action states corresponds to the fluid distribution layer) because difference in density/pore size between the front part 18a and the rear part 18b is designed to prevent fluid contact between parts 18a and 18b. Moreover, the liquid barrier 11, 21 provided between the front part 18a and the rear part 18b prevents liquid leaking to the rear part 18b should the front part be temporarily saturated. See column 4, lines 36-39.

Furthermore, Guidotti et al. is clear that the distribution layer is the lower layer 20 which extends through the entire core. Thus, the distribution layer is ***not*** absent in at least a substantial part of the opposite waist portion of the article.

As Guidotti et al. do not disclose or suggest each and every feature of claim 1, Guidotti et al. do not anticipate or render obvious the claim.

Claims 2, 3, 6 and 10-17 recite additional features of the invention and are allowable for the same reasons discussed above and for the additional features recited therein.

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over Guidotti et al. are respectfully requested.

New claim 18 recites, *inter alia*, that the fluid distribution layer is arranged so as to extend in the crotch portion and in at least a substantial portion of one of the waist portions of the article and is absent in at least a substantial part of the opposite waist portion of the article so that the absorbent core has a thickness in the opposite waist portion that is less than a thickness in the crotch portion and the one waist portion. Guidotti et al. does not disclose or suggest this feature.

New claims 19 and 20 recite additional features of the invention and are allowable for the same reasons discussed above with respect to claim 18 and for the additional features recited therein.

New claims 21 and 22 have also been added to recite additional aspects of the invention. Those claims are similar to claim 1, and further define that the fluid distribution layer is in direct contact with the fluid receiving layer and the fluid storage layer. This is also not taught by Guidotti et al., which has the distribution layer at the bottom of the core, in contact only with the storage layer.

New claim 22 further recites that the liquid affinity of the fluid distribution layer is higher than the liquid affinity of the fluid receiving layer, and the liquid affinity of the fluid storage layer is higher than the liquid affinity of the fluid distribution layer. This is also not taught by Guidotti et al.

Applicants appreciate the indication that claims 4, 5, 7 and 8 define patentable subject matter. However, in view of the above amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that all of the claims are allowable and the entire application is in condition for allowance.

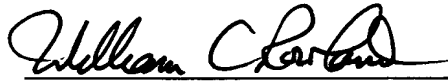
Should the Examiner believe that anything further is necessary to place the application in condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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